

ORDINARY PEOPLE IN THE ACT OF DOING EXTRAORDINARY THINGS: TEACHER AS LEADERS IN SCHOOL REVITALISATION

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While the challenges confronting schools worldwide are greater than ever before, and many teachers possess capabilities, talents and formal credentials more sophisticated than ever before, the responsibility and authority accorded teachers has not grown or changed significantly in decades. A new image of the teaching profession is needed; one that recognises both the capacity of the profession to provide desperately needed school revitalisation and the striking potential of teachers to provide new forms of leadership in schools and communities.

This paper reports on Australian research on a school revitalisation project called IDEAS (Innovative Design for Enhancing Achievement in Schools) and in particular the creative and inspirational work of teacher leaders engaged in the process of school renewal. This creative and inspirational work illustrates the actions teacher leaders in the school revitalisation process. This work has mobilised the professional community even in the most difficult circumstances (Andrews & Lewis, 2005). The schools we have worked in resemble the characteristics or cultural typography outlined by Stoll (1997). Teacher leaders in IDEAS schools have mobilised school communities to build 'new schools' and as such have developed a capacity for sustainable improvement. An undeniable force towards improvement has been through demonstrated pedagogical leadership, the work of "just teachers" building and working within a professional learning community (Louis *et al.*, 1996).

The other aspect of this research illustrates the importance of a synergistic relationship between teacher leaders and principals. This relationship sees teacher leaders working in a mutualistic relationship with principals to build sustainable school improvement. This relationship is called parallel leadership.